

BYE 9317-70
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3 August 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Trip Report B/G Harold F. Knowles to Edwards AFB
and Area 51, 18-24 July 1970

I. Purpose of Trip: Observe Carrier Operations (BLUE GULL VI)

II. Persons Contacted:

Edwards AFB:

Colonel Schamber
Other Base personnel

Kitty Hawk:

Carrier personnel

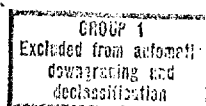
Area 51:

Other Base personnel

III. Sequence of Events:

Saturday, 18 July:

Departed Andrews AFB via OSA C-118. RON Laredo AFB,
Texas.



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Sunday, 19 July:

Arrived Edwards AFB. Air Commodore Colin Coulthard, Air Attache, arrived as our guest for BLUE GULL. Dinner hosted by Colonel Schamber.

Monday, 20 July:

Briefings and tour of the Base. Observed preparations for carrier exercise.

Tuesday, 21 July:

Navy aircraft delivered A/C Coulthard, OSA observers, and me to Kitty Hawk by 0900. First U-2R pilots arrived soon afterward, completing four touch-and-go landings and one full stop (trap). As he departed, next pilot arrived, completing four touch-and-go's and two traps. The carrier operated just west of San Clemente Island, approximately 150 miles from Edwards. During the waiting period for the aircraft to make round trip home, refuel, and change to JACKSON crews, we lunched with carrier Executive and Operations officer. The JACKSON crews completed four touch-and-go's and two traps, each. They performed outstandingly, especially considering the additional pressure of maintaining their honor in front of A/C Coulthard. We immediately departed the Kitty Hawk for Edwards, via Navy aircraft, catapulted in fact. A/C Coulthard departed for Los Angeles to spend evening with JACKSONS before boarding airliner for Washington.

Wednesday, 22 July:

Detailed debriefings and critique of BLUE GULL VI.

Thursday, 23 July:

Departed for Area 51. Lunch with [] and [] Observed test firing of AQUILINE rail for launch speed. Discussed SAC use of Area with [] and []

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surveyed facilities extensively. Cocktail party at "The Club" and dinner at cafeteria.

Friday, 24 July:

Departed for Andrews AFB.

IV. Summary:

A/C Coulthard:

He was well hosted and enjoyed the opportunity to visit Edwards and to take part in the operation. He was genuinely pleased with the JACKSON contribution to the program, and especially with their outstanding carrier performance - and rightly so. He is a very knowledgeable and experienced airman who is a definite asset to our program. I shall cultivate his interest and friendship to the degree appropriate.

Edwards AFB:

Colonel Schamber's unit performed outstandingly. The one problem he does have is to overcome the frustration caused by insufficient operational action. The BLUE GULL exercise was a shot in the arm. I took the opportunity to talk with the entire unit, congratulate them, and urge them to stay on top. One minor U-2R incident on the Kitty Hawk is worthy of note because it demonstrates the inherent risks involved in spite of optimum weather, expert crews, and ready aircraft. During a trap, the pilot retards the throttle and waits for the hook to engage. If it does not, or he thinks it has not, he advances the throttle to regain airspeed for another try. If he waits too long, he may end up in the sea. If the hook engages, advancing the throttle merely extends his landing roll. Ordinarily this is no problem for the Navy because their aircraft are designed for this operation. The U-2R, however, has such a large wingspan that as the landing roll is increased, more and more of the wing extends over the angled deck. With the only landing gear being on the fuselage, the U-2R can easily dip a wing during landing roll.

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The "whiskers" hanging down from the wing tips help just as the "pogoş" do during ground taxiing. However, if the aircraft is to the left of centerline during a longer roll, the "whisker" on the left wing tip hangs over the side of the ship and is useless. On the very first trap, the pilot encountered this situation and made contact with the ship's edge. The damage was slight (mere scratching and bending of non-control surfaces) but in the interest of safety we dispatched the pilot after only one trap. His proficiency was unquestioned. The incident was advantageous, however, because it reminded us of the inherent risks of this extraordinary operation. The Navy was greatly impressed and praised our efforts. I believe we can operate off carriers as long as we are so directed, but we must keep in mind the continuing possibility of losses heavier than usual.

Area 51:

Mr. [] should prove to be an outstanding member of the AQUILINE team. He briefed me during my previous visit to McDonnell-Douglas and convinced me at that time that he is a strong ally. After only two days at Area 51 he had a handle on everything. We are very fortunate. The rail testing was delayed one day for our benefit. It was successful. The catching net broke again, however. Mr. [], OSA AQUILINE Project Officer, is assigned there in an observer capacity to learn, plan, and be prepared to assume project responsibility when we enter the operational phase in January. I made it perfectly clear to everyone that AQUILINE responsibility presently rests with ORD; that Mr. [] will provide host services as requested, and that OSA personnel would not interfere. Everyone assured me that there would be no sovereignty problems.

After looking over the Base plans for SAC use and inspecting the present location of SAC equipment and the allocated SAC deployment space, I believe we need to modify our agreement with SAC. I have already initiated this action. The OXCART area is ideal for SAC deployment purposes and would unquestionably be used by them under wartime conditions. Some of their equipment was prepositioned in this area, I believe, in hopes of getting squatters rights because

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we had denied SAC use of some parts of this area. We can use this area for our continuing projects, e. g., [] for AQUILINE, Hangar 8 for [] etc., without prejudicing SAC's use. Likewise, SAC can rearrange their quantity and location of prepositioned equipment to afford us the opportunity to use the facility. I believe we can negotiate a better agreement which will (1) provide better security to Area 51 by minimizing, if not eliminating, periodic SAC visits for inspection; (2) provide SAC a better operational facility in wartime; (3) minimize prepositioned equipment, much of which can and should be used daily elsewhere, such as starting units, etc. The main SAC considerations leading to the present agreement were alleged to be (1) cost; (2) adequacy of facilities, and (3) maintenance inspections of SAC equipment. If we accede to SAC's wishes entirely, we could prejudice our security. I believe we can satisfy them and ourselves if we offer them the best facilities on a reasonable "hands off" basis.

C-118 Aircraft:

I believe it appropriate to comment on this aircraft, normally used for cargo airlift with passenger capability. We took along several of the OSA staff who have business at Edwards AFB and Area 51 but not of sufficient importance to justify a commercial airline ticket. By taking a larger contingent, we not only made better use of the C-118 but gave these people an unprecedented visit to these places. As a result, they and their counterparts accomplished much more than can be done via telephone or cable. Also, the sites were impressed that so many OSA staff members would take the time to visit them personally. We had fifteen total on board including the aircrew. I intend to use the C-118 similarly in the future when appropriate.

[]
HAROLD F. KNOWLES
Brigadier General, USAF
Director of Special Activities

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D/SA/HFKnowles:fMcP

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